



**Tom Barrett**  
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

---

Michael Bonds  
President, Board of Directors  
Milwaukee Public Schools  
P.O. Box 2181  
Milwaukee, WI 53201-2181

Director Bonds:

As Mayor and Chair of the MPS Innovation and Improvement Advisory Council, I know that one of the most important decisions that will be made in this community in the near future is the selection of the next Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools.

General agreement exists about what needs to be done for our kids to succeed – as laid out in the District's Strategic Plan, the Department of Public Instruction's Corrective Action Plan, and other thoughtful community dialogues and reports. All can agree that:

- We need high-performing learning environments at all schools.
- We need to get our students into schools for a sufficient length of time.
- We need to make sure our students arrive ready to learn.

Unfortunately, we are far from achieving success – graduation rates lag significantly behind the statewide average, fewer than 40% of kids achieve proficiency in reading and less than 30% in math. We need a strong, innovative education leader who can transform our vision into success, who will always put students first when working to achieve it, and who will not accept excuses for not attaining it.

Attracting a candidate of the caliber our students deserve requires that we demonstrate that our community as a whole is committed to strongly supporting the next superintendent. That commitment is precisely what the Innovation and Improvement Advisory Council will strive to achieve. By working with the district to achieve greater fiscal efficiency, monitoring the Corrective Action Plan to position the district to move beyond possible sanction, and working to maximize federal dollars, the Advisory Council in partnership with the district will set the stage for attracting world class leadership. So it is not only appropriate but critical that the Advisory Council participate in recruiting and selecting the next superintendent, as confirmed by State Superintendent Tony Evers when he addressed the council this past Monday.

Therefore, I am submitting my thoughts on what characteristics will be essential in the next Superintendent. I have also asked the members of the Advisory Council to contribute their recommendations and have incorporated their input. The following characteristics are essential in the next Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools.

1. Experience in a diverse, urban community and a genuine understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that environment presents.
2. Strong leadership and the proven ability to identify talented individuals, empower and encourage them to succeed, and hold them accountable for success.
3. Demonstrated negotiation and problem-solving skills. The next superintendent must not only be able to identify strategies for success, but also be able to bring the necessary stakeholders together to implement those strategies.
4. Excellent communication skills and the ability to garner the support of teachers and parents.
5. Experience managing large, complex and diverse entities and demonstration of sound business practices.
6. Focus on research-driven strategies and the commitment to using research-based evidence to drive education reform.
7. Ability and willingness to be pro-active and innovative and not allow excuses to stand in the way of success.

These are unprecedented times – the federal government stands ready to provide billions of dollars to support communities that are committed to the kinds of reforms necessary to ensure student success. The stakes have never been higher for our students, our families or our community as a whole. We must pull together all of our resources to seize this opportunity for our children. My intent is to continue to bring the community together around this critical selection, and to attract an innovative leader as we were able to do with the police chief.

While I share your eagerness to find a leader that meets these criteria, I do want to stress the importance of being thorough and allowing the necessary time to ensure that we select the best candidate for our children and community.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to improve education outcomes in Milwaukee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "Barrett" clearly distinguishable.

Mayor Tom Barrett

Cc:

Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors

MPS Innovation and Improvement Advisory Council Members

Superintendent Tony Evers, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Governor Jim Doyle